

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 7, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson  
U.S. Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson,

As Members of Congress working to promote civil and human rights across the globe, we are greatly disturbed by reports of arrests, disappearances and extra-judicial murders of gay men in Chechnya, located in the North Caucasus region of Russia, by local authorities. Such allegations must be addressed immediately with Russian and Chechen authorities. During your confirmation hearings, we were heartened to hear your commitment to continue the State Department's tradition of advancing human rights for all through American foreign policy. To this end, we ask for your immediate assistance in securing an end to the targeting and slaughter of gay men in Chechnya and your support for a fair investigation of and punishment for the perpetrators of this human rights atrocity.

On April 1st, the Russian newspaper *Novaya Gazeta* reported that hundreds of gay men have disappeared in Chechnya since early March and at least three are known to be dead, as part of a concerted effort by Chechen authorities to target gay men.<sup>1</sup> The international human rights organization Human Rights Watch and the LGBT Network in Russia have verified these reports, with the latter starting an emergency hotline for those who find themselves in immediate danger. Disturbingly, in response to these reports, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov's spokesman denied the existence of LGBT individuals, saying "you cannot arrest and repress those who simply aren't in the republic" and continued "if such people existed in Chechnya, law enforcement would not have to worry about them, as their own relatives would have sent them to where they could never return." Russian authorities have likewise dismissed these reports, yet at the same time recommended that survivors file official complaints. Given that Chechnya has long had a tumultuous human rights record and LGBTQ people face stigma by their families and society in general, and that local authorities are believed to be the perpetrators of these acts, expecting victims to report violence and persecution to the proper authorities is clearly impossible.

No one should live in fear of unspeakable violence and persecution. With this in mind, we urge you to publicly condemn the targeting of gay men in Chechnya, and to make clear to Russian authorities

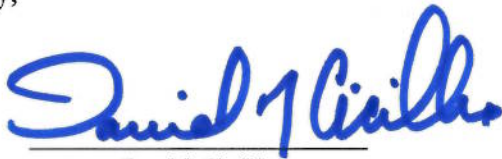
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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/01/world/europe/chechen-authorities-arresting-and-killing-gay-men-russian-paper-says.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/01/world/europe/chechen-authorities-arresting-and-killing-gay-men-russian-paper-says.html?_r=1)

that lawless detentions, arrests, torture, and murders are unacceptable and that a proper, thorough investigation of these atrocities must take place. The United States stands as a beacon of hope for marginalized people across the world and has a commitment to protect and promote the human rights and dignity of all persons. During your trip to Russia this spring, we urge you to make clear that the Russian government must do everything it can to stop these killings; account for those who have been detained; condemn and investigate the attacks; and ensure that those targeted can flee to safety.

We thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and we await your timely response.

Sincerely,



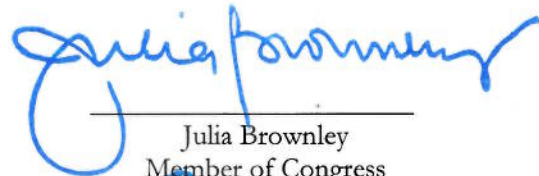
David Cicilline  
Member of Congress



Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress




Pete Aguilar  
Member of Congress



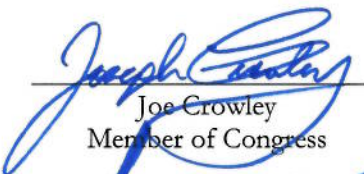
Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



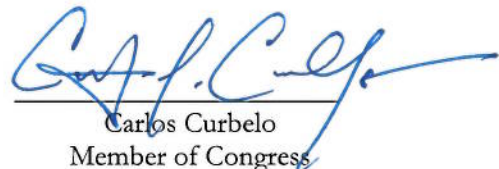
Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress



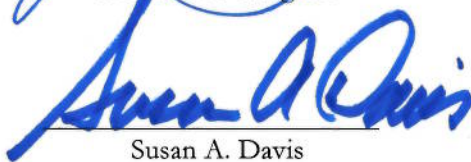
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Joe Crowley  
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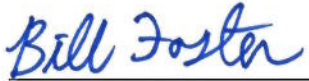
Charles W. Dent  
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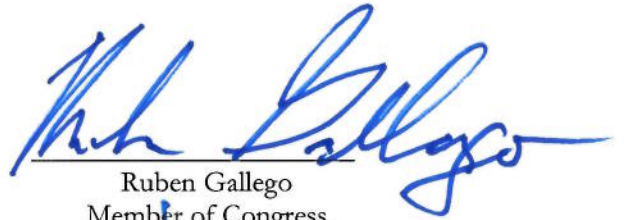
Ted Deutch  
Member of Congress



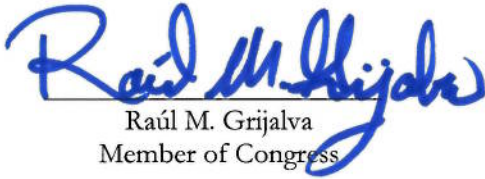
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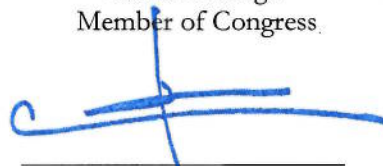
Bill Foster  
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
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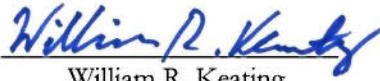
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Brian Higgins  
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Pramila Jayapal  
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William R. Keating  
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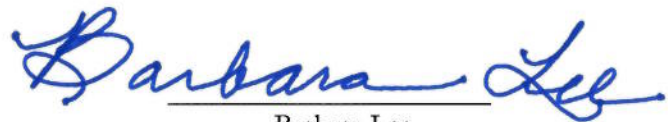
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Derek Kilmer  
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Barbara Lee  
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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



Sean Patrick Maloney  
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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



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Gwen S. Moore  
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Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



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Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Frank Pallone Jr.  
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Jimmy Panetta  
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Chellie Pingree  
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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



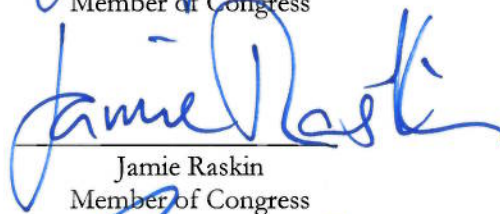
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Jared Polis  
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David Price  
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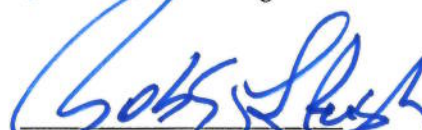
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Ileana Ros-Lehtinen  
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Bobby Rush  
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Jan Schakowsky  
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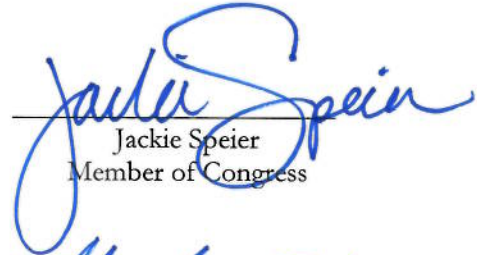
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Adam Schiff  
Member of Congress

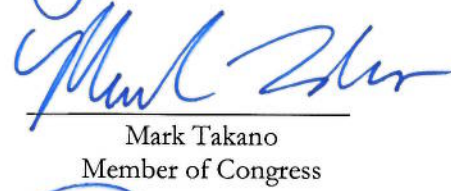
  
Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

  
Kyrsten Sinema  
Member of Congress

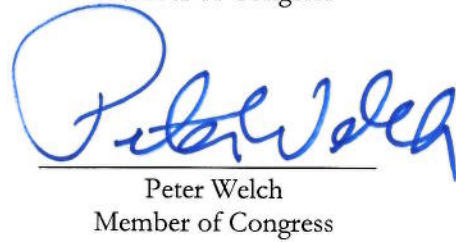
  
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Jackie Speier  
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Eric Swalwell  
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Mark Takano  
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Niki Tsongas  
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